

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 204 265

SP 017 934

AUTHOR McClain, Shirila R.; Spencer, Norma L.
 TITLE Quality Education: An Interdisciplinary, Multicultural Endeavor.
 PUB DATE Feb 81
 NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (Detroit, MI, February, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS Cultural Awareness; *Cultural Pluralism; Educational Objectives; Higher Education; *Interdisciplinary Approach; *Multicultural Education; Preservice Teacher Education; Teacher Education Curriculum; Teacher Effectiveness; Teaching Skills

ABSTRACT

The most effective education can best be achieved in settings that subscribe to a multicultural education philosophy, with an interdisciplinary perspective. Since America is a culturally pluralistic nation, where race, ethnicity, and culture are major public issues, public education should provide accurate information about the diverse groups. Since the early 1900s, the aims of multicultural education have broadened beyond curriculum revision to include providing students with skills and abilities that enable them to function within their own and the mainstream culture. These aims have been endorsed by educational organizations and should be translated into meaningful policies. Knowledge from other disciplines, particularly sociology, linguistics, and psychology, can be viewed from a multicultural perspective. Educators who have this perspective on the influence of family lifestyle, childrearing practices, bilingual education, cultural identity, and learning styles would not have to rely so heavily on testing. Other disciplines, notably anthropology, political science, and economics, have concepts that can be integrated with multicultural education theories and practices. Multicultural education should be made an integral part of the teacher education curriculum, involving liberal arts faculty as well as the education faculty in a combined endeavor to provide truly excellent education. (PG)

 * Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
 * from the original document. *

ED204265

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Shirla R. McClain

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official NIE
position or policy.

Quality Education: An Interdisciplinary, Multicultural Endeavor

Shirla R. McClain
Kent State University
Kent, Ohio

Norma L. Spencer
University of Akron
Akron, Ohio

Paper presented at the
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
Annual Meeting
February, 1981

SP 017934

Introduction

The issue of quality education has been a prime concern for many decades. The multifaceted aspects of this issue have escalated to such proportions that educators have initiated a quest for quality in a variety of areas; namely, in schools, in non-school settings, in the preservice talent pool, among the teacher education faculty, and in the disciplines that contribute to educational knowledge. The quest for quality is in truth a search for those factors that can bring about excellence in education.

While all of the aforementioned facets are vital to the pursuit of such excellence, this paper will be limited to addressing the manner in which knowledge from various disciplines can contribute to educational knowledge and ultimately to quality education that is multicultural.

The paper is set in a theoretical framework which assumes that (1) quality education can best be achieved in settings that subscribe to a multicultural education (MCE) philosophy, and (2) interdisciplinary perspectives contribute to excellence in education.

Support for the positions offered throughout the paper are a combination of theory and practice based on literature in the field of MCE and the authors' actual classroom experience in teaching in culturally pluralistic schools. Such experience verified the need for an interdisciplinary approach to quality education for all children. Three disciplines considered crucial to this endeavor are sociology, linguistics, and psychology.

This paper is presented in three parts. Part One provides a rationale for, and a brief synopsis of, the historical and philosophical foundations of

multicultural education. In addition, MCE goals are examined in relation to the missions of educational institutions.

A discussion of the manner in which knowledge of specific concepts from sociology, linguistics, and psychology impact on education in culturally pluralistic classrooms is the focus of Part Two. The educational implications of additional disciplines and general recommendations for forming collaborative relationships with the College of Arts and Sciences are set forth in Part Three.

Part One

The rationale for MCE is grounded in several realities of American society. First, America is a culturally pluralistic nation. Second, race, ethnicity, and culture are major issues in policy decisions and practices that affect the American public. Third, lack of accurate information about the diverse cultural groups in our society means that an uninformed public cannot contribute to, nor make, informed decisions that will bring about excellence in education. All of these realities signify the need for MCE.

While a variety of definitions of MCE exist, in essence MCE is a reform movement that calls for the systematic, purposeful inclusion of cultural/ethnic groups that have been traditionally excluded from the curriculum of American schools, or those whose images have been presented in a distorted or stereotypic manner when included. The inclusion of all groups will foster education that is multicultural rather than education from a monocultural perspective. The authors will present the historical and philosophical foundations of MCE to clarify this point.

Two positions related to ethnicity in America were recognized early in the 1900s. One, the melting pot theory, suggested that the United States should be a nation in which all ethnic differences should be "melted away" and combine to form a new and unique blend of people, superior to all of America's diverse ethnic groups. The second position--cultural pluralism--espoused a "salad bowl argument" that countered the melting pot theory. Advocates asserted that each ethnic group should maintain its ethnic culture, traits, and institutions and combine its ethnic heritage with all others to make a unique whole that would enrich the total society. Neither position ever came into being. Instead the United States became a nation of Anglo-conformists whose intent was to rid European ethnic groups of their distinct ethnic traits and to have them assimilate into the mainstream Anglo-dominated culture. It is important to note that none of the proponents of the various positions--the melting pot theorists, the cultural pluralists, nor the assimilationists--ever seriously intended to include ethnic minorities of color into the unique American mosaic. Systematic exclusion through discriminatory practices and policies remained in vogue and in fact.

Assimilationist policies dominated American life from the early 1900s to the early 1960s when Afro-Americans, weary of oppression, led an unprecedented fight for their rights. This event, known as the Black Revolt, brought into question assimilationists' policies and practices. Other ethnic minority groups, embracing the ideals and demands of this civil rights movement, and seeking ethnic pride, joined with Afro-Americans in pressing for political, economic, social, educational, and cultural equality. White ethnic groups who had been forced to renounce much of their heritage also began to push for recognition of their "abandoned" cultures. Consequently, a movement known as the "new pluralism" emerged, one that sanctioned a form of cultural plural-

ism that would include all of America's ethnic groups and socioeconomic classes--participants in the mainstream as well as the disenfranchised.

The philosophy that emerged from the "new pluralism" became one which dignified differences, prized diversity and viewed it as an enrichment to human life. Attaining self-worth, as well as attaining an appreciation of the worth of others, were essential ingredients in the philosophy of the "new pluralism". Educational institutions at all levels responded with curriculum revisions and multicultural education began.

From this basic beginning, multicultural education has broadened its goals beyond curriculum revisions. Banks (1977) has delineated the goals of multiethnic education as: 1) helping individuals gain greater self-understanding by viewing themselves from the perspectives of other cultures; 2) providing all students with cultural and ethnic alternatives; 3) providing all students with knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function within their ethnic culture, the mainstream culture, and within and across other ethnic cultures; 4) reducing pain and discrimination which members of some ethnic and racial groups experience due to their racial/physical/cultural characteristics; and 5) helping students to master essential reading, writing, and computation skills (pp. 7-10).

The goals of MCE have been endorsed by several professional organizations which provide leadership to universities and/or public schools. Among them are 1) the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) whose MCE Commission issued the organization's MCE position statement "No One Model American" (Hunter, 1974, pp. 21-22); 2) the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) which has committed itself to the mandates of MCE and published a text on the topic (Grant, 1977); and 3) the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), which

revised its standards to include one which speaks directly to the issues of MCE (Standard 2.1.1) and incorporates MCE throughout the others (NCATE, 1981). Professional organizations that focus on specific content areas, e.g. the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) have also issued statements or publications that reflect their position supporting the concept of MCE (NCSS, 1976). It appears then that the mission of educational institutions, at all levels, should be to translate those positions and MCE goals into meaningful realities. The next segment of the paper describes the gateway.

Part Two

Utilizing Knowledge From Other Disciplines: Sociology, Linguistics and Psychology

The literature indicates that sociologists and linguists, to a greater degree than psychologists, have addressed the issue of culture as it pertains to their respective disciplines. Similarly, black sociologists and psychologists more than their white counterparts, have been concerned with cultural dimensions of sociology and psychology.

However, the authors contend that theoretically, all professionals need to be able to view their respective disciplines from a MC perspective if they are to contribute to quality education.

The following are examples of types of knowledge which have emanated from the aforementioned disciplines and the relationship of such knowledge to MCE.

Sociology

Family lifestyles and structure. Billingsley (1968) has described the structure of the black family as having pragmatic qualities (p. 25). Men

performing household tasks, women working outside the home (often as the principal breadwinner) and children being responsible for the care of siblings are examples of such qualities.

Hill (1972) writes that the ability of blacks to adapt to various roles within the family is a strength--a strength which has been necessary and responsible, in large part, for the survival of the black family in America (p. 20). However, America's institutions (including schools) have traditionally viewed this strength--the ability to adapt to family roles--as a weakness, and an indication of family instability.

Becoming knowledgeable about the sociological foundations of the structure and lifestyles of traditional minority families can help educators to view minority children from a more positive perspective.

Socialization and childrearing practices. Educators could also benefit from sociological concepts about mountain (or hill) culture. Reul (1974) writes that traditionally, hill families have had an adult centered culture. Because the life on the frontier was so difficult, needs of the parents had to come first. Discipline has been handled on a short-range basis. However, few rules and regulations are placed upon children. Because of the hard life they will face as adults, children are generally overindulged and permitted to be free to enjoy life while they are young. Mountain families who migrate to the cities often find that school personnel mistake such parental practices for parental neglect or lack of care (pp. 241-242).

Strong kinship bonds, which also mark hill families, often cause parents to keep children out of school to participate in family activities or to return "home" for frequent visits.

Childrearing practices of other groups, i.e., Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, Vietnamese Americans, Jewish Americans, Black Americans, Native

Americans, etc. would help educators to view the families from a cultural perspective (rather than being judgmental).

Linguistics

Linguists have long recognized the relationship between language and culture, and the ensuing educational implications. Educators have generally been less knowledgeable in these areas. Educational implications for non- and limited-English speaking students are more widely known than such implications for native-English speaking students whose linguistic characteristics are nonstandard.

Bilingual education for Hispanic youths and bidialectal education for Black and Appalachian youths have several commonalities. First, no attempt is made to erradicate the native language. Rather, students are taught English--Standard English (SE)--as an alternate language to be used in appropriate settings.

Second, methodology must follow second language learning principles rather than memorization of rules, learning definitions, diagramming, etc. Finally, teacher attitudes about foreign and NS language must be that of language difference rather than language deficiency.

It is especially crucial that educators view Nonstandard English (NSE) from the perspective of linguists who have documented the systematic structure of NSE. Such knowledge is necessary in order for teacher educators to recognize how the student's native language (NSE) systematically interferes with the learning of the second language (SE). Spencer & McClain (1980) list specific objectives for students and educators in a bidialectal education program.

In addition to the influences of sociology and linguistics upon educational knowledge that contributes to MCE, the field of psychology should be

able to make substantial contributions beyond those which it has already made (e.g. human growth and development, learning theories, child and adolescent psychology, etc.). Two psychological concepts which the authors view as critical to quality education are identity and learning styles; both must be framed in a multicultural perspective.

Much has been written about identity--for purposes of this paper, defined as the image one has of him/herself based on cultural perspectives. The literature is replete with articles on the importance of positive self-image, self-confidence, etc. Assuredly, there continues to be a need to help many students develop such qualities. There seems to be an equal need, however, to examine one area that works against developing positive self-concepts upon school entry--intelligence testing in all of its various forms.

What needs to be thoroughly studied and halted is the abuse and misuse of intelligence test results. Frequently, test results alone are used for a basis of important decisions about students; used in isolation they are punitive to all students--majority or minority. But, from a multicultural perspective, it appears that educators must examine the position of Williams and Mitchell (1980) which states that tests are based on a white majority frame of reference. Thus, they assert that for minority groups, tests measure only their familiarity with white culture which is operationally defined as "intelligence". Perhaps a fairer assessment for all students would be to use Holt's (1969, p. 167) definition of intelligence which reads "The true test of intelligence is not how much we know how to do, but how we behave when we don't know what to do." Interpreted as such, intelligence is not viewed as a derived score, but as a behavior under a new set of circumstances.

Because test results have been used for ranking, sorting, labeling, it is imperative that their misuse and abuse be eradicated if we are to attain quality education. Hopefully, educators can gain knowledge in this

area from psychologists who are concerned with cultural bias in testing. Not until such assistance is provided for test interpreters (educators) can students be assessed accurately. On this note Hilliard (1979) has suggested that one of the signs that education for a free society is working is that "most educators, especially school counselors and school psychologists, will have the professional ethics to limit their practice to areas of skill and cultural sophistication that they possess, and will have the courage to learn by asking for appropriate help...: (p. 118).

In terms of gaining knowledge about ethnic learning styles--modes of learning that are specific to given ethnic groups--the field of psychology can contribute to an understanding of the relationship between ethnicity and cognitive style. For example, research on right and left brain functioning, field sensitive vs. field independent styles, bicognition, and inductive vs. deductive learning are topics which could be very enlightening when viewed in their relation to ethnicity.

If educators could know more about such concepts they could know much more about how children learn, hence how to teach them effectively. As Hilliard (1979) cogently indicates, "most teachers would know more about what every child knows or what they have as resources for learning than what the child does not know." (p. 118).

Educators armed with sufficient knowledge about learning styles based on ethnic/social/cultural diversity would not have to rely so heavily on testing.

Part Three

Contributions of other disciplines

While the focus of this paper has been on the contributions of sociology, linguistics, and psychology to educational knowledge, other disciplines can

contribute/have contributed as well.

Anthropology. Discussions of anthropological concepts--culture, acculturation, and assimilation--can be integrated with concepts in education. Kerri (1979) notes that anthropologists indicate that every culture must be viewed in the context within which it is manifested. He suggests then that "in a culturally pluralistic society, such as the United States, a multicultural approach to socialization and education that allows for the maintenance of distinctive cultural patterns and the creation of a type of understanding of one another that would facilitate meaningful social interaction is greatly desirable" (p. 13).

The concept of acculturation, exchanging and/or adopting cultural values and material goods, can help educators understand the importance of ethnic alternatives. Understanding the process of assimilation allows persons to become knowledgeable about the mainstream and how minority group members must adapt themselves to become participants in the mainstream culture. Education that is multicultural fosters the development of ideas about cultural variants, dignifies differences between and within cultures, and broadens the knowledge base of students. Students so educated can make informed decisions about themselves and others who are different.

Political Science. Facts, theories and generalizations related to the concepts of power and powerlessness, justice and equality, freedom and oppression can be pursued in terms of their educational implications. For example, educational issues surrounding power and powerlessness are evident in arguments regarding community control of schools. Justice and equality are key concepts in issues related to integrated schools, desegregation, busing, and educational equity. Freedom, oppression, and individual rights are concepts examined in social studies and history curriculums and must be

addressed if contemporary controversies are to be resolved.

Economics. It is imperative that concepts from economics be integrated with concepts from education. Exploitation and poverty must be dealt with clearly in order to represent the perspectives of the culturally/ racially/ethnically different groups within the United States of America. Analytic contrasts of the current economic status of European immigrants' descendants and ethnic minority groups of color can be examined and explained in terms of the disparities due to several major dimensions: conditions of entry into the United States, retention or eradication of culture and language; discrimination, etc.

Only a few disciplines have been cited. A case could be made for incorporating knowledge from disciplines related to the legal profession, the medical profession, religion, and all of the human service professions. Beyond the broad disciplines, knowledge from the more specialized disciplines, e.g. geriatrics, women's studies, etc., provide educational knowledge that has curricular implications for schools. Target populations who are discriminated against due to age, sex, class, race or handicap are being studied, or have been included for study, in various aspects of the curriculum at elementary, junior, and senior high levels.

Recommendations

University Faculty

The major reason that public school personnel lack knowledge of MCE is that teacher training is virtually devoid of such concepts. Teacher trainers themselves lack knowledge of cultural pluralism and MCE. Therefore, a primary recommendation at the university is in-service education for faculty. The cooperation of boards of trustees and administrators, as well as teaching

faculty, is required in this endeavor (McClain & Spencer, 1979).

Curriculum revision and design must be undertaken in order to make education that is multicultural an integral part of teacher training programs. Implementation of the most recent NCATE standards can help to achieve this end.

In-service methods may include: 1) inviting knowledgeable educators to campus; 2) visiting other universities which have successful MCE programs, and 3) attendance at MCE conferences.

There is also a need for dialogue between and among teacher education faculty and faculty from the arts and sciences. Meaningful interdisciplinary dialogue can be mutually beneficial to all involved. Where applicable, general college courses that are generic should include content about all members of the nation's population. Since all people function in diverse environments within our pluralistic society, education--in its broadest sense--can not be left solely to faculty within the College of Education. NCATE has emphasized the need for multicultural perspectives to be included in the content of general courses.

Given culturally pluralistic perspectives in general college courses provides a multicultural foundation on which to build the professional sequence. Beyond the general courses, the College of Arts and Sciences has indepth bodies of knowledge that are especially beneficial to secondary education majors. Moreover, electives in the disciplines cited earlier could be most instructive to early childhood, elementary, special, vocational, art, music, and physical education majors. Dialogue between the two colleges can assist educators in moving toward curriculum designs and improved methodologies/strategies/techniques to approach excellence in education.

Non-School Settings

Although the paper has focused on the benefits to the College of Education, there are reciprocal benefits that derive from dialogue between the two colleges. Students of sociology, linguistics, psychology are trained to work primarily in non-school settings. Therefore, there is a need for these students to have some field based experiences in urban, suburban and rural schools or communities. Pre-professional and elective courses in the College of Education can provide students with observation skills, knowledge about the roles and responsibilities of teachers, career choices in education, educational issues, use of media, etc. Such content and experiences will help to give students first hand knowledge of and strategies for use with the individuals and groups affected by their respective disciplines.

Epilogue

It is abundantly clear that quality education can only come from quality educators who are capable and competent to deliver excellence in education. It is also abundantly clear that we must face the fact that since America is a culturally pluralistic nation we must provide all of its children with MCE. Positive support for multicultural education has been evidenced through position statements from professional organizations throughout the 70s. Now is the time to translate those positions into policies and practices for the 80s.

No longer can educational institutions accept solutions proposed outside of the profession; we must face out problems where they occur. To do otherwise is tantamount to "the man who was looking for a lost coin two blocks from where it was lost because the light was better at the new spot (Hilliard, 1974, p. 44)."

Our solutions lie within our profession. To obtain quality education, an interdisciplinary, multicultural endeavor must be set into motion.

Bennett (1979, p. 8) cogently states the issue thusly:

In point of time and in point of emphasis, a collective awakening is necessary. We need new books, we need new pictures, but most of all, we need new men and women to recognize and accept the duty to reevaluate everything and to make that reevaluation a part of their professional and their personal lives.

He concludes that the only question before us really is: "Have we got the will, the vision, and the courage to create "the holy dream" we were meant to be?"

References

- Banks, J. A. Multiethnic education: practices and promises. Fastback 87. Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1977.
- Bennett, L. Education as the practice of freedom. In V. L. M. Van Brunt (Ed.), Black students in a multicultural setting: Implications for teacher effectiveness. San Diego: San Diego State University, Institute for Cultural Pluralism, 1979.
- Billingsley, A. Black families in White America. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968.
- Grant, C. A. (Ed.) Multicultural education: commitments, issues and applications. Washington, D. C.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1977.
- Hill, R. B. The strengths of black families. New York: Emerson Hall Publishers, 1972.
- Hilliard, A. Restructuring teacher education for multicultural imperatives. In W. A. Hunter (Ed.) Multicultural education through competency-based teacher education. Washington, D. C.: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1974.
- Hilliard A. Cultural-linguistic pluralism of education for a free society. In V. L. M. Van Brunt (Ed.) Black students in a multicultural setting: implications for teacher effectiveness. San Diego: San Diego State University, Institute for Cultural Pluralism, 1979.
- Holt, J. Education for failure. In W. F. O'Neill (Ed.), Selected educational heresies. Glenville, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, and Company, 1969.
- Hunter, W. A. Antecedents to development and emphasis on multicultural education. In W. A. Hunter (Ed.), Multicultural education through competency-based teacher education. Washington, D. C.: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1974.
- Kerri, J. N. Anthropological implications of education and the black American. In V. L. M. Van Brunt (Ed.), Black students in a multicultural setting: implications for teacher effectiveness. San Diego: San Diego State University, Institute for Cultural Pluralism, 1979.
- McClain, S. R. & Spencer, N. L. Obstacles to multiculturalism: the community, higher education, and the schools. Toronto: First Congress on Education, 1979. ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 159, 271.

- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).
Standards for accreditation of teacher education. Washington,
D. C.: Author, 1981.
- National Council for the Social Studies. Curriculum guidelines for
multiethnic education. Washington, D. C.: Author, 1976.
- Reul, M. R. Territorial boundaries of rural poverty: profiles of
exploitation. East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1974.
- Spencer, N. L. & McClain, S. R. Essential understandings, rationale,
and objectives for teaching Standard English. In H. P. Baptiste,
M. L. Baptiste, & D. M. Golinick (Eds.), Multicultural teacher
education: preparing educators to provide educational equity,
Vol. I. Washington, D. C.: American Association of Colleges
for Teacher Education, 1980.
- Williams, R. L. & Mitchell, H. The testing game. In R. L. Jones (Ed.),
Black psychology, 2nd ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1980.